

**Comments on National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) at
NIH:
Enhancing Community-Engaged Research through the Clinical and Translational
Science Awards (CTSA) Program**

The **American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)** represents over 143,000 occupational therapy practitioners and students. As the national association representing occupational therapy, a profession dedicated to maximizing independence and function for people across the lifespan, AOTA appreciates this opportunity to submit comments to guide NCATS' development of a research agenda utilizing the community engagement infrastructure developed through the CTSA program to strengthen translational research.

Our comments correspond to the numbered suggestions from the Request for Information (Notice Number: NOT-TR-13-001).

#4. Techniques and/or tools from CTSA community engagement infrastructure

AOTA requests that support for practice based research networks continue as these networks have the greatest potential for improving translational research and engaging the community. Support for practice based research network is needed for developing and building collaborative relationships, so micro-grants for meeting space, refreshments, ADA accommodations, and local travel reimbursement could be helpful for some community organizations.

#5. Translational research questions of most interest to patients, providers, policy makers, researchers and other key stakeholders

AOTA requests continued funding of translational research to improve habilitation and rehabilitation outcomes. Greater communication between bench and bedside scientists are needed to not only know what works and why, but for whom and how (i.e., the best way to deliver the interventions). Also, the practice-based research should be encouraged to examine health-care utilization, cost-effectiveness, or quality of life and daily functioning, in addition to health/clinical outcomes.

#6 Role of community-based participatory research

Community-based participatory research plays an important role in clinical and translational research and should be supported by the CTSA Programs. However, the funding mechanisms should allow for an extended timeline for community-based participatory research because collaboration and communication with organizations in the community often require additional time. Building and sustaining relationships between CTSA researchers and community partners requires clear and respectful communication, extra effort, administrative support, and a longer period of time, compared to the timelines of traditional bench research. In rehabilitation research, recruiting participants

with certain disabilities is often challenging. Thus having two years instead of one year to write a grant and collect preliminary data would be helpful to some researchers and communities.

#8. Developing definitions, scientific measures, metrics, and outcomes for community engagement research and model programs.

Ideally, the definitions, measures, and outcomes for community engagement research would be agreed upon in a consensus conference but another way to examine implementation and effectiveness is to develop a web page for users to vote on definitions, rate measures and outcomes, provide feedback, and share experiences. If the measure is freely available, the site could provide the link to accessing the measure, serving as a resource for community members and researchers. Resources, such as this, should be widely disseminated to medical, allied health, rehabilitation fields, and social sciences.

#9 Training opportunities within the CTSA infrastructure to prepare researchers

With regard to training opportunities within CTSA to prepare researchers to engage in translational research in the community, has NCATS considered emphasizing inclusion of researchers from underrepresented populations in grant applications? Data suggests that the number of NIH-funded scientists from diverse populations has not steadily increased over the past decade, despite mechanisms such as Diversity Supplements. Health disparities research also indicates that in order to improve health outcomes, we need to train more health professionals and researchers from underrepresented populations because they are more likely to return to work with individuals from these communities. Therefore, funding to train scientists from underrepresented populations should help engage communities in translational research and potentially reduce health disparities.

The American Occupational Therapy Association thanks NCATS for considering our comments on enhancing community-engaged research through the CTSA program.

Respectfully submitted,

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